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DEPARTMENT FOR G/TIP, EUR/PGI, EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [CY](#)

SUBJECT: TIP INTERIM ASSESSMENT: CYPRUS GETTING ENERGIZED

REF: A. STATE 176302

[B](#). NICOSIA 1819

[C](#). NICOSIA 1768

[1](#). The Republic of Cyprus (RoC) has made tangible progress in addressing trafficking in persons since receiving a Tier II Watch List rating in the 2006 TIP report. While certain aspects of the RoC's National Action Plan remain works-in-progress, government efforts to prevent TIP, protect victims, and prosecute traffickers are on the upswing, the result of President Tassos Papadopoulos ordering pertinent agencies to step up efforts to implement the Plan.

[2](#). Responses are keyed to questions posed in Ref A:

A) Status of Revisions of Anti-TIP and Immigration Legislation: In October, the Ministry of Interior completed interagency consultations on a draft bill to revise the RoC's anti-TIP regime, and later forwarded the bill to the Attorney General. After final legal vetting, the AG will present the bill to the Council of Ministers, whose approval is necessary before the legislation reaches parliament. MoI contacts note that passage of the bill is a high RoC priority; they aim to see it become law by December 14, when the legislature's holiday recess commences. (This seems to us a best-case scenario, however -- passage by March 1 looks more realistic.) The RoC also is attempting to revise its existing Aliens and Immigration Law to bring it into compliance with the European Union acquis. The government completed internal vetting in March 2006, later submitting the bill to Parliament. MoI contacts again hope for passage by mid-December -- this, too, may prove overly optimistic, as debate on the immigration statute likely will be lengthy and heated.

Regarding Ref A request that Cyprus abolish the "artiste" visa category, RoC Migration Director Annie Shacallis November 3 clarified that no such category actually exists. Artistes follow the same procedures as other foreign workers in obtaining work permits which, for statistical reasons only, specify the type of labor to be performed. Shacallis confirmed, however, that an artiste could not change employment sectors unless she earlier had filed a complaint against her employer, and the RoC had identified her as a TIP victim.

Work permits to prospective artistes had fallen in number, from 4,621 in 2004 to 4,000 in 2005. As of mid-October, fewer than 3,000 had sought entry to Cyprus in 2006. The MoI attributes this drop to stricter oversight of cabarets that solicit foreign laborers. To help ensure that artistes understood entry/exit limitations and employment terms, the MoI has proposed to the Foreign Ministry the imposition of a personal interview requirement. Under this regime,

interviews would take place at Cyprus's consulates in source countries.

B) Using Existing Anti-trafficking Legislation Against Traffickers: Rita Superman, head of the RoC National Police's Anti-trafficking Unit, provided Emboffs November 1 with recently compiled statistics that seemingly contradict her earlier contention that police were utilizing prostitution statutes vice TIP laws to prosecute (Ref B). The latest data show TIP prosecutions doubling over 24 months, from 19 in 2004, to 34 in 2005, to 40 in 2006 (as of mid-October). Conviction statistics were available only for 2005; in that year, courts found nine of 34 suspects guilty.

C) Opening of Government-run TIP Victim Shelter: RoC Welfare Office contacts informed the Embassy November 9 that the Council of Ministers had approved the use of a pre-existing building to house the shelter (Ref C). As of November 15, efforts to hire shelter staff were ongoing. No firm opening date has been announced, however.

D) Approving/Distributing RoC TIP Victim Handbook: Welfare Office staff in October finalized the text of an internal government handbook regarding the handling of trafficking victims. In early November, the Permanent Secretary of the Labor Ministry forwarded the handbook to the Council of Ministers for final approval. Welfare officials will lobby to speed the process, although they were unable to estimate when the Council might make a decision.

E) Formalizing and Implementing a Referral System to Aid TIP Victims: With the adoption of the new handbook, the RoC will put in place a formal referral system allowing "front-line responders" to direct possible TIP victims toward government and/or NGO shelters.

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F) Producing and Launching a Public Awareness Campaign: At an October 31 Parliamentary hearing to gauge progress on the RoC's National Action Plan, participants noted that the Finance Ministry had not approved funding for a large-scale public awareness campaign on TIP. Nonetheless, agencies are proceeding piecemeal and have achieved some success. For example, in the works is a TIP awareness seminar, bringing to Nicosia experts from both source and destination countries. Organized in collaboration with the Council of Europe, the MoI-run event will take place in February 2007. In addition, Interior Ministry contacts November 3 sought Embassy assistance in procuring translation/re-broadcast rights to two UN-produced, anti-TIP spots; G/TIP is now working the issue with its contacts in New York.

The National Police in October prepared anti-TIP fliers which aim to reduce demand for trafficked women. Officials will announce the campaign at a press event in early December, and will distribute the pamphlets while conducting community policing activities. To raise internal awareness of the TIP problem's severity in Cyprus, the Police conducted the first of two seminars November 6-10 (the second takes place November 13-17). At their conclusion, over 100 officers will have studied the National Action Plan, victims' assistance handbook, and Cypriot anti-TIP legislation currently in force.

13. COMMENT: While much work remains to be done, recent months have seen the RoC attack TIP with increasing vigor. That President Papadopoulos himself raised trafficking in his meeting with the Ambassador (Ref C) seems proof his administration finally "gets it." Working-level contacts claim the new Ministers of Labor and Interior have placed the fight high on their priority lists. And the Parliamentary hearing on TIP proved a boon, generating significant press play and raising legislators' awareness at a critical time, weeks before they consider revised TIP and immigration legislation. Hoping to spur even greater momentum, the

Embassy, through its Bicomunal Support Program (BSP), has taken aim at TIP, funding and disseminating studies that gauge its severity, and building capacity among home-grown NGOs to fight it.

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